



## Democratic Efficacy and the Varieties of Populism in Europe

### WORKING PAPER

# Conceptualizing Democratic Efficacy

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## Abstract

This working paper proposes the concept of democratic efficacy and provides a first empirical illustration of it using European Social Survey (ESS) data. The concept has been designed to capture the way subjective sentiments toward politics—i.e., external and internal political efficacy—are connected to ‘objective’ individual capacities that are assumed to promote democratic behavior. It has two components: political efficacy and democratic capacities. Four types of political efficacy are specified based on two variants—i.e., external and internal political efficacy: high political efficacy (PE), low political efficacy (PE), paternalists, and skeptics. Democratic capacities consist of political knowledge, news consumptions, political attachment, political values, and political skills. People with complete democratic capacities have: (1) a certain level of factual political knowledge; (2) consumed news regularly; (3) non-intensive partisans; (4) identities with core values of democracy—i.e., political and legal equality, tolerance toward dissenting opinion, and individual autonomy—and (5) had some involvement in political activities (as a proxy of skills). The concept of democratic efficacy is a typology created from the two concepts. This typology has eight categories. The empirical test suggests that the democratic component is suitable to introduce additional analytical distinction into the concept of political efficacy. The role of context in this conceptualization is twofold: contextual factors are both treated as predictor and moderator variables. They are assumed to shape the level of democratic efficacy, but they also affect its behavioral consequences. We collected several context-level indicators from international datasets that can be tested as predictors or moderators.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	4
Political efficacy.....	4
Democratic capacities .....	7
Democratic efficacy.....	11
The role of context.....	13
References.....	15

## Introduction

In this report, we conceptualize the term of democratic efficacy and empirically test it on the dataset of the 8<sup>th</sup> round of the European Social Survey (ESS). The concept of democratic efficacy is an analytical framework to understand the challenges of populism and to provide guidance for actions and interventions. The term is designed to capture the way subjective sentiments toward politics—i.e., external and internal political efficacy—are connected to ‘objective’ individual capacities that are assumed to promote democratic behavior. The concept of democratic efficacy thus embodies both subjective (attitudinal) and ‘objective’ (measurable individual skills) dimensions. Also, as DEMOS interprets populism as a sign of mismatch between the operation of the polity and citizens’ needs, facing the challenges of populism necessitates taking into account the role of both sides: the system and the individual. Democratic efficacy should be interpreted in its context; therefore, it is important to uncover how contextual factors shape it and how its working and effects on political behavior is conditioned by those factors.

In line with this idea, we argue that this term consists of two dimensions: political efficacy and democratic capacities. Also, it is important to discuss the role of context. In the report below, we work out each of these aspects and connect them to each other. The 8<sup>th</sup> round of the ESS is used to test the concept because this survey covered most of the indicators and country cases we use. It is important to note that this dataset is not complete in light of our conceptualization. First, it did not measure one of the indicators of our concept, political knowledge. Second, it measured the concept of political efficacy, news consumption, and partisan attachments in a different way than that which we suggest in this report. Third, some of our country cases were not covered by the 8<sup>th</sup> round of the ESS. As a result, the findings presented here do not contain individual-level data from Greece, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovakia, and Denmark. Despite these shortcomings, after reviewing all cross-country databases available, this dataset seems to be the most appropriate to use since it covers most of the indicators and country cases we need for testing and illustrating our concept of democratic efficacy.

## Political efficacy

The concept of political efficacy (PE) was originally formulated to capture citizens’ subjective attitudes toward politics, more specifically, their notions about their role and position within the political system. As Campbell and his colleagues (1954), the inventors of the term, put it: “Sense of political efficacy may be defined as the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, i.e., that it is worthwhile to perform one’s civic duties. It is the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change” (187). Over the next few decades, as an important predictor of political participation, the concept of political efficacy gained huge popularity in political behavior research (see Abranson & Aldrich, 1982; Finkel, 1985; and Robinson, 1976).

The term has undergone significant alterations since its birth. Most importantly, the original concept has been divided into two separate components: one external and one internal variant

(Balch, 1974). External political efficacy (EPE) refers to “beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizens demand” (Niemi et al, 1991: 1408). Thus, it represents a subjective perception of the role of citizens *in general* within the political system, while internal political efficacy (IPE) refers to “beliefs about one’s own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics” (Niemi et al, 1991: 1407), thereby indicating a subjective conception of the role of respondents *in particular* within the political system. The validity of this distinction has been subsequently demonstrated (Balch, 1974; Craig et al, 1990), and research showed that their different combinations can produce diverse outcomes in political behavior (Craig, 1980; Pollock, 1983, Feldman et al, 2015).

In line with these findings, people can be divided into four general groups based on their level of political efficacy. Some people have a high level of PE on both dimensions: they believe in both the responsiveness of the political system and their political competences to influence it. Its reverse form is when one has low level of PE in both dimensions. Those perceive politics to be difficult to shape by ordinary people. A mixed type is when one thinks that the political system cares about people’s will (higher EPE), but do not feel herself as capable of meaningful participation (lower IPE). As these people believe in the political system more than in themselves, they can be labeled as ‘paternalists’. Others feel that it is hard to change the political system (lower EPE), but they are confident of their own political capabilities (higher IPE). As the strong inner motives are at odds with the perceived external opportunities, this group can be labeled as ‘skeptics’ (see table 1).

*Table 1. The concept of political efficacy*

	Political efficacy			
	high	low	paternalists	skeptics
external PE	+	-	+	-
internal PE	+	-	-	+

Political efficacy is usually measured as an index created from several indicators (Campbell et al., 1954; Balch, 1974; Craig et al, 1990). Some indicators relate to the external dimensions while others to the internal one. The 6 items used in the seventh round of the ESS seem to be appropriate to use; it has been demonstrated that the indicators indeed capture two different constructs: the external and the internal political efficacy variants. Table 2 shows that these items and the results of a confirmatory factor analysis (ESS 7<sup>th</sup> round) confirm that there are indeed two different constructs behind them. The level of agreement with these statements was measured on an 11-point scale.

*Table 2. Results of the confirmatory factor analysis (factor loadings) (Bene, 2019)*

	Factor loadings
<b>external PE</b>	
How much would you say the political system in [country] allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?	.76
How much would you say that the political system in your country allows people like you to have an influence on politics?	.89
How much would you say that politicians care what people like you think?	.74
<b>internal PE</b>	
How able do you think you are to take an active role in a group involved with political issues?	.84
How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?	.85
How easy do you personally find it to take part in politics?	.70
$\chi^2$	2967.33
df	8
p	.000
CFI	.969
SRMR	.042

Note: The low level of significance of  $\chi^2$  test is due to the large sample (see, Schermelleh-Engel et al, 2003). The other goodness of fit metrics (CFI, SRMR) indicate well-fitting models.

The eighth round of the ESS included only two internal and two external political efficacy items<sup>1</sup>. The illustration below draws upon those questions. Respondents had to indicate their level agreement with each statement on a 5-point scale, where 1 represents the lowest level of political efficacy. High level of internal and external political efficacy is established when a given respondent marked 3 or above for both questions.

*Table 3. The share of respondents of the 8th round of the ESS based on their level of political efficacy*

Political efficacy			
high	low	Paternalists	skeptics
10,4 %	61,1 %	14,1 %	14,4 %

These findings indicate that a large majority of respondents has a low level of political efficacy in both dimensions. Only 10% of people in the sample are considered to be politically efficacious. The results suggest that it is appropriate to distinguish the two mixed types of political efficacy, since significant shares of our respondents can be classified by these

<sup>1</sup> External dimension: “How much would you say the political system in [country] allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?” and “And how much would you say that the political system in [country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?”. Internal dimension: “How able do you think you are to take an active role in a group involved with political issues?”, and “how confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?”. Answers were measured on 5-point response scales.

categories. Almost equal shares of the sample belong to these two mixed forms (paternalists and skeptics).

## Democratic capacities

Political efficacy is popular in the literature because it has been considered as one of the most important predictors of political participation. The decline of political participation was a widespread trend in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Blais, 2010). Thus, understanding its roots represented a major challenge for political science. However, over the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the further existence of this universal trend is not obvious. While there are a few countries where such a decline has persisted (France, Italy etc.), the level of participation has stabilized in several countries (Finland, Czech Republic, Poland etc.) while it has increased in several other western nations such as the US, Germany, the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, or Austria<sup>2</sup>.

At the same time, another emerging trend of political participation has received increasing scholarly and public attention: the rise of populism and illiberalism in modern liberal democracies (Mudde, 2016; Norris & Inglehart, 2019). While the decline of political participation seems to stop or even reverse in several countries, an increasing number of people participates in political processes with supporting populist and non-democratic political actors. Consequently, it is now the democratic quality of political participation that has become the main challenge for political science rather than its level.

Political efficacy is an important motivational background for political participation, but it says nothing about its democratic quality. To make the concept up to the contemporary challenges of political science, it seems reasonable to supplement it with a democratic component. We propose that democratic participation is enabled by a higher level of political efficacy that is paired with certain democratic capacities.

The normative theories of democracies impose certain requirements not only on the level of political system or the elite, but also on that of the citizens. According to these, ideal democracy can only work if citizens have certain democratic capacities. For instance, some degree of information is needed and desired if they are to substantively participate in politics (Carpini – Keeter, 1996). In democratic settings, citizens have to make decisions on the most important political questions. Besides, decision-making based on relevant information is more likely to reflect voters' true preferences. Consequently, citizens need to have some general political knowledge, but also keep up with the day-to-day political processes. However, having political knowledge and being up-to-date are not enough to make informed political decisions. Citizens have to be reflective about their decisions and base their choices and political preferences on them (Dewey, 1954).

However, strong emotional attachments may undermine this reflexivity and introduce serious biases in reasoning and evaluation of political information (Shapiro & Bloch-Elkon, 2008; Petersen et al, 2013). Further, the idea of democracy is based on some core values that citizens are required to embrace in order to make it work properly. First, citizens' political and legal equality is a prerequisite of democracy (Dahl, 1956). Second, the normative justification of

<sup>2</sup> see, <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/continent-view/Europe/40>

democracy rests upon the premise that citizens are capable of making free and autonomous decisions (Lakoff, 1990). Third, democracy is a social activity where individuals have to consider that others also have legitimate interests, opinions, and values. Citizens have to tolerate and listen to opinions different from their own, because democracy is based on the idea of exchanging and confronting competing views and interests (Arendt, 1968; Mutz, 2006). These values correspond to the three core values of democracy. Namely, the equality of interests, and the political autonomy and reciprocity, as conceptualized by Brettschneider (2006). Also, certain political or civic skills have long been considered to represent crucial democratic capacities (Verba et al, 1995). We assume that coping with populism requires specific skills. For example, the quality of being able to deal with plurality and conflicts in politics and policy; practicing empathy towards others' legitimate needs and goals; scrutinizing leaders and their decisions; consuming media content in a reflective manner (media literacy); and being able to express one's own legitimate needs, aspirations, and preferences.

Several components of democratic capacities stem from the normative notion of the democratic citizen described above. Here we lay out these components, suggest items to measure them, and try to establish minimal criteria for considering whether someone has such a capacity.

First, a certain level of factual knowledge of the political system, its actors and processes is a crucial democratic capacity. *Factual knowledge* refers to "declarative knowledge" (Eveland et al, 2004: 87) of political institutions and actors. We argue that some level of factual knowledge is a prerequisite for a normatively desired democratic political behavior. That is usually measured by test-like questions. In cross-national research design, questions should be very carefully selected, as most of these are highly context-bound. The following open questions are proposed to measure political knowledge in the DEMOS project.

1. Which is the biggest party group in the European Parliament?
2. Who is the current President of the European Commission?
3. Who is the current Minister (Secretary – UK) of Foreign Affairs in your country?
4. How many votes do you cast on nationwide (federal) general elections?
5. Normally, how often do general elections take place in your country? (... years)
6. What is the only country that decided to leave the European Union?

A moderate level of political knowledge is required for establishing democratic capacity. Accordingly, we consider three right answers to the questions above as the minimum criteria. However, politics is a vivid, continuously evolving sphere. In order to have sufficient information to make choices, people need to keep up with the latest developments, and actively monitor news on politics. As such, having a certain level of political information consumption can also indicate better democratic capacity. We argue that a person who deliberately consumes news a few times a week can be regarded as a regular news consumer. This is an important aspect of our concept of 'democratic capacities'. To measure news consumption, we propose the following question:

How often do you deliberately choose to read, listen or watch news from television, radio, newspaper, or news website?

- never
- only occasionally
- A few times a week
- most days
- every day

Also, as strong emotional attachment is detrimental to reflective processing of information, strong political attachment contradicts democratic ideals. However, literature also demonstrated that partisan feelings are important to democratic behavior as motivational background for



participation and base of stability of policy preferences (Converse, 1969; Abramson & Aldrich, 1982). In this sense, moderate partisan sentiments are not considered problematic for enabling democratic behavior; only strong emotional attachment is difficult to reconcile with democratic ideals. Emotional attachment to parties is usually measured by asking respondents how close they feel themselves to their favorite party. Yet, this question is not sophisticated enough to capture emotional identifications. Hereby, we propose a unique index for measuring emotional attachment more deeply:

Please think of the party you would vote for if the elections were to be held next Sunday?

1. On the whole, how much do you like this party? (0-10 totally dislike – totally like)
2. And how much do you like the official leader of this party? (0-10 totally dislike – totally like)
3. How often do you disagree with things this party and its politicians say or do? (0-10 never – all the time)

Please say to what extent you agree or disagree with each of the following statements (0-10 totally disagree – totally agree):

4. this party wants the best for people like me.
5. this party holds the same values like me.
6. this party do not lie for people.

An index can be created from these items and only the highest scores (e.g. mean value above 7) could represent a problem for democratic efficacy.

Identifying with the core values of democracy is also a crucial trait of democratic citizens. People conforming to the normative ideal of citizens embrace the idea of political and legal equality for all citizens and are open with and tolerant toward dissenting opinions; they also feel themselves capable of making free and autonomous decisions (see e.g. Welzel – Inglehart, 2008). The following questions can be used for measuring the degree of identification with these core values. Values above five indicate a certain degree of agreement; thus, we consider these respondents to have such democratic capacities.

How much do you agree with the following statements (0 – 10 disagree - agree):

1. I think it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally.
2. It is important to listen to people who are different from me even if I disagree with their views.
3. It is important for me to make my own decisions about what I do freely and independently of others.

(Based on the 8<sup>th</sup> round of the ESS, with some modification.)

Scholarship seems to face a paradoxical situation when it comes to political skills. While it is acknowledged that being involved in politics (Verba et al., 1995) necessitates some knowledge and skills—especially in increasingly complex liberal democracies—research has largely neglected the latter in terms of operationalization and conceptualization (on this, see Kirlin, 2005). In a political context, the Civic Voluntarism Model of Verba et al. (1995) defines ‘civic skills’ as “organizational and communication skills, which allow the use of time and money effectively in a political arena.” Verba et al. (2009) also uses the term ‘civic skills’ to describe ‘skills which are relevant for political competence.’ To measure these abilities, scholars have surveyed if respondents, within a period of six months, have: written a letter to a politician, gone to a meeting where they took part in a decision, planned or chaired a meeting, or given a presentation or a speech. It is obvious that political participation and activities are not identical with political skills, but given the fact that skills cannot be properly captured by survey questions, the level of political involvement is an often-used proxy for political skills: those who are involved in political activities are more likely to have political and civic skills because skills are evolving during these activities. Consequently, a political participation scale is used

as a proxy for political skills. If a respondent has been involved in any of the listed activity forms, she meets the minimum criterion for having democratic capacities.

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent 15 things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you...

1. ...contacted a politician, government, or local government official?
2. ...worked in a political party or action group?
3. ...worked in another organization or association?
4. ...worn or displayed a campaign badge/sticker?
5. ...signed a petition?
6. ...taken part in a lawful public demonstration?
7. ...boycotted certain products?
8. ...posted or shared anything about politics online, for example on blogs, via email, or on social media such as Facebook or Twitter?

(From the 8<sup>th</sup> round of the ESS.)

In our conceptualization, people with complete democratic capacities have (1) a certain level of factual political knowledge; (2) consumed news regularly; (3) non-intensive partisanship; (4) identities with the core values of democracy—i.e., political and legal equality, tolerance toward dissenting opinion, and individual autonomy—and (5) some involvement in political activities.

*Table 4. The concept of democratic capacities*

	political knowledge	political news consumption	political attachment	Identification with values			political activity
				equality	tolerance	autonomy	
Citizens with complete democratic capacities	+ at least 3 right answers	regular (at least few times a week)	not extremely high (below mean value of 7)	+ above 5	+ above 5	+ above 5	not entirely passive (at least 1 activity)

The 8<sup>th</sup> round of the ESS conducted between 2016-2017 contained items for all these variables with the exception of political knowledge. This limits the illustration below to political news consumption, partisanship, identification with core values of democracy, and political activity. To measure political news consumption, the ESS questionnaire asks how many minutes a respondent spends consuming political news per day. This way of posing the question resulted in answers where the large majority of respondents were counted as daily news consumers since only 6% of them indicated 0 minute. This result contradicts the findings of previous research (see e.g. Ksiazek et al, 2010; Prior, 2007), thereby it should be treated with caution. Still, the statistical variances observed among individuals may indicate actual differences in news consumption. In DEMOS, we consider a “regular news consumer” to be someone who consumes news at least several times a week. However, because of the specific question mentioned above and the distribution of answers, in this illustrative case we will consider regular news consumers to be the respondents who read, watch, or listen to news at least 30 minutes per day. Partisanship closeness to a political party was measured on a 4-point scale, and only the extreme value indicating ‘very close’ was regarded as a highly partisan answer. Participants were also asked to what extent they identify with certain character types and values

on a 6-points scale. Three items of the ESS survey are closely related to the three core values of democracy discussed above.<sup>3</sup> In detail, 1 and 2 values indicate identification with these statements as they were labeled as ‘very much like me’ and ‘like me’ respectively. Our political activity measure was based on the ESS questionnaire, thus it is here exactly what we described above. Table 5 shows the share of respondents who meet these criteria for each component of our democratic capacities concept.

*Table 5. The share of respondents of the 8th round of the ESS based on specific democratic capacities*

	news consumption	partisanship	equality	tolerance	autonomy	political activity
criteria	at least 30 min per day	1 – 3 /4-point scale	1-2/6-point scale	1-2/6-point scale	1-2/6-point scale	at least 1
+	79,4 %	95,2 %	71,5 %	65,2 %	68,5 %	52%

The findings above suggest that all of these capacities are widely shared in the democratic countries under investigation. The large majority of respondents share the following democratic capacities: they consume news regularly, are non-intensive partisans, and they believe in the values of equality, tolerance, and individual autonomy. More than half of them have been involved in at least one political activity during the preceding 12 months.

However, table 6 indicates that their combined presence is not as universal: only a fifth of the respondents have all these democratic capacities, while the large majority of respondents have incomplete capacities. These findings suggest that these capacities are suitable to let us categorize respondents: the validity of them is supported by their wide presence in democratic countries, and their combined occurrence can differentiate people with more or less democratic capacities.

*Table 6. The share of respondents of the 8th round of the ESS based on the mixture of their democratic capacities*

People with complete democratic capacities	People with incomplete democratic capacities
19,5 %	80,5 %

## Democratic efficacy

After conceptualizing democratic capacities, the concept of political efficacy can be supplemented with a democratic component in order to introduce a quality aspect into the original term. While political efficacy is a subjective attitude toward politics that is crucial as a motivational background of political behavior, democratic behavior requires some objective capacities as well. The concept of democratic capacities supplement this subjective construct (political efficacy) with these objective requirements. As a result, the concept of democratic efficacy, taken as a more nuanced approach to political efficacy, may provide an appropriate

<sup>3</sup> (1) She thinks it is important that every person in the world should be treated equally. She believes everyone should have equal opportunities in life. (2) It is important to her to listen to people who are different from her. Even when she disagrees with them, she still wants to understand them. (3) It is important for her to make her own decisions about what she does. She likes to be free and not depend on others.

framework for understanding democratic political behavior, which is one of the most important themes of the DEMOS project.

We conceptualize democratic efficacy not as a linear but as a two-dimensional concept. It would not make sense to simply add the measures of democratic capacities to those of political efficacy: we believe it is conceptually more sound and more interesting to capture the different combinations of the two sets of measures.

Theoretically, pairing the two concepts makes sense only if they are not highly correlated with each other. As long as people with high level of political efficacy are exactly those who have complete democratic capacities, the latter component would not make any substantial contribution to the original concept. Connecting the term of political efficacy to the democratic capacities is meaningful if the latter makes relevant distinctions within categories of political efficacy and help differentiate people with the same level of PE.

A chi-squared independence test was performed to check whether the two categorical-level variables (PE and democratic capacities) are related in any way. The two components are not entirely independent of each other. A significant ( $p < .001$ ), but modest (Cramer's  $V = .213$ ) relationship exists between the two-level democratic capacities component and the four-level political efficacy component. However, table 7 indicates that the democratic component yield a more nuanced picture of political efficacy. More precisely, the cells of Table 7 provide different forms of democratic efficacy.

*Table 7. The share of respondents of the 8th round of the ESS based on democratic efficacy*

democratic capacities	Political efficacy				Total
	high	low	paternalist	skeptics	
democratic capacities	3,7 %	8,3 %	2,9 %	4,5 %	19,5 %
incomplete capacities	6,6 %	52,9 %	11,1 %	9,9 %	80,5 %
Total	10,4 %	61,1 %	14,1 %	14,4 %	100%

Let us interpret the most interesting categories with a focus on populism.

Almost two thirds of the respondents with a high level of political efficacy have incomplete democratic capacities. In principle, those people are active in politics, although their democratic skills fall short of the democratic ideal. We assume that this group might be more open to populism than people with both high political efficacy and complete democratic capacities. Of course, here we took a very strict approach, grouping all the respondents under the label of 'incomplete capacities' who underperform at least in one capacity measure. It is very likely that the low value of a single capacity measure does not signal the same level of 'incompleteness' than a general lack of democratic capacities. As a result, empirically speaking, it seems useful to create different categories of people with incomplete capacities, according to the number of capacity measure they underperform in.

The category of people with incomplete capacities and low political efficacy is theoretically not so challenging: those are the ones who are not interested in politics and probably have low

political activity level as well. However, they are very important from a policy perspective. The question is what could be done in order to increase their democratic skills and political efficacy feelings. A related question is whether they are open toward populist arguments or their low interest in politics makes them largely immune to populist arguments.

At the same time, a minority of people with a low level of political efficacy has complete democratic capacities. Those people are interested in politics, consume the media, have high democratic values, and are active in politics while they do not feel that they can change politics. They seem to have a general skeptical attitude toward politics. It is also remarkable that a larger share of skeptics have complete democratic capacities than paternalist citizens. This is in line with the theoretical construct: we expect people with complete democratic capacities to believe in themselves and share a more skeptical attitude – if so – toward the political system. A possible hypothesis is that those skeptical people with high democratic capacities might be open to populist arguments, as they seem not to trust the political system.

Overall, it has turned out that the democratic component is suitable to introduce an additional analytical distinction into the concept of political efficacy, which may help capture behavioral outcomes more precisely.

## The role of context

However, citizens' behavioral outcomes may also be shaped by the political and media contexts where respondents who are characterized by certain types of democratic efficacy live. The role of context in this conceptualization is twofold. First, contextual variables should be applied as predictors that explain the way context shapes the level of citizens' democratic efficacy. At the same time, we assume democratic efficacy works differently in varying contexts and that contextual variables are crucial moderators when the behavioral consequences of democratic efficacy are investigated. The same level of democratic efficacy may be associated with different outcomes depending on the specific context.

In a strict sense, the context is not part of the core concept of democratic efficacy, but it is worth mentioning its role here because that may be important at the empirical level. And there is a related conceptual problem: what kind of contexts might be relevant for interpreting democratic efficacy? Building on the elements of the concept of democratic efficacy as presented above, we argue that the following contextual dimensions and variables may be relevant:

- political system: measures of the quality of democracy, features of the political system (e.g., consensual or majoritarian, electoral systems), the share of redistribution;
- media system: measures of press freedom, public trust in the media, journalists' role conception, the role of social media in news consumption;
- education: measures of the quality of the educational system (PISA), public expenditures on education, civic education.

Finally, as a general contextual variable, the level of economic development and its measures (GDP per capita, HDI) should also be considered.

Of course, the actual role of those contextual factors in either predicting or modifying democratic efficacy can only be determined through empirical analysis.

The above mentioned indicators and similar ones that capture individual countries' institutional, cultural, political- and media system-related features are available from international datasets. We present a selective collection of these indicators in table 8.

*Table 8. Indicators for measuring the effects of contextual predictors and moderators*

Dimension	Aspect	Source
Media system	Press Freedom	Freedom House
	Political parallelism of media system	European Media System Survey (EMSS) (calculation based on Lelkes, 2016)
	Level of political interference in the work of media outlets	EMSS, The World of Journalism Study (WJS)
	Level of economic interference in the work of media outlets	WJS
	Political significance of mass media	EMSS
	Credibility of media outlets in the public eyes	EMSS, Reuters Institute Digital News Report (RI-DNR)
	Journalists' role conceptions	WJS
	Role of social media in news consumption	RI-DNR
Education	Public expenditure on education	OECD Education
	Students' results from PISA tests	OECD PISA
	Citizenship education at School (existence & hours/week)	Eurydice – Citizenship Education at School in Europe
Political system	Quality of Democracy	Democracy Index of The Economist Intelligence Unit
	How long has the particular country been democratic?	Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS)
	The responsiveness/openness of the political system	World Bank – Voice and Accountability index
	Electoral fractionalization of the party system	CPDS
	Effective number of political parties	CPDS
	Disproportionality of the — electoral system	CPDS
	Consensual or majoritarian political system	CPDS
	the degree of government spending in the share of GDP	CPDS
	Corruption	Transparency International
Economy	GDP per capita	OECD
	the mean level of GDP growth in the last five years	CPDS, OECD
	HDI (Human Development Index)	United Nations Human Development Report
	Openness of the economy	CPDS
	Gini-index (measurement of inequality of income)	World Bank

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